



Information for Parents and Students

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WELCOME

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to MedEntry, and congratulations on making the decision to pursue a career in the medical field. Medicine is a rewarding career, with the potential to make lasting and positive change to the community.

No doubt you will have started considering the various universities that offer medicine, or considered sitting the UMAT. At MedEntry, our aim is to assist you in entering medicine by providing preparation for the UMAT exam, as well as for interviews and university admissions requirements.

In this guide is some basic information about how to get into medical school, the difference between various universities and what MedEntry can offer to assist you.

For more information, please visit www.medentry.co.nz, or call us on 1300 MedEntry (from New Zealand, 00613 9359 9960).

Regards,

The MedEntry Team

OBTAINING ENTRY INTO MEDICINE

Entry criteria

Every university differs slightly in how they go about selecting students for medical and health science courses. You should research each university individually to see what their criteria are and which course will suit you best.

In general, entrance into Medicine and Dentistry in New Zealand (whether graduate or undergraduate) is based on three criteria:

- Your GPA, or Grade Point Average, which is performance in your university degree
- Your score in UMAT (Undergraduate Medical and Health Sciences Admission Test)
- Your score in an interview or oral assessment (note: Otago University medicine does not require an interview, but dentistry does)

This is very different to most other courses which take into account your performance in high school examinations alone.

The criteria are weighted differently depending on the university.

Do I need a really high GPA to study medicine?

You do not necessarily need a top-tier GPA to gain entry into medicine in NZ. GPAs at the Universities of Auckland and Otago are on a scale from 1 to 9. The minimum required GPA is generally 6, which is equivalent to a B+ average.

It is the combination of your UMAT, GPA and interview performance that will help you gain entry. Generally, the higher your UMAT score and interview performance, the lower the required GPA.

In general, entrance into medicine and dentistry in NZ requires a combination of your UMAT score, an interview and your GPA.

A high UMAT score can help take the pressure off as it lowers the required GPA.

However, this does not necessarily work in the reverse. Since most medicine applicants tend to have a high GPA, it is your UMAT score that becomes important in distinguishing between applicants. Thus a high GPA does not negate the need for a high UMAT score, whereas a high UMAT score will lessen the need for a top-tier GPA.

Entry Pathways

There are two main pathways available for students wishing to study medicine in NZ:

1. Entry after the first year of a university degree (Biomedical Science at Auckland University or Health Sciences First Year at Otago University)
2. Graduate entry: for those who have completed an undergraduate degree

Additionally, NZ students can consider applying for an undergraduate medical degree at an Australian university.

What is the difference between the pathways?

An undergraduate course means you enter your chosen course straight away i.e. you commence studying medicine at university straight out of high school. This pathway is not offered in NZ.

The quickest way to get into medicine in NZ is entry after the first year of a university degree.

A graduate course means you must first complete an undergraduate degree in another area of study, such as science. Then, assuming you have:

- maintained a high enough GPA
- scored highly on the UMAT
- scored well in an interview

you will obtain entry into medicine and will be able to begin your medical degree.

In general, the graduate pathway is longer and more expensive than the other pathways. If you are sure that you wish to pursue medicine, it is far less stressful, less expensive and less time consuming to obtain entry via the undergraduate or first year university pathway.

Pursuing one of these pathways allows you to get out into the field and start practicing earlier compared to graduate medicine. Such students will obtain more experience compared to those who take the graduate medical entry pathway and who end up practising much later in life.

The graduate pathway is best for those who are very unsure of their career path or who are unable to obtain entry via the undergraduate or first year university route.

What if I don't do well in UMAT or my interview?

If you are unable to gain entry into medicine after the first year of your university degree, you can apply for the graduate entry route. Keep in mind however that there may be limits imposed upon the university regarding how many times you may apply to the medical program, for example, the University of Auckland allows only two attempts at entry into medicine (this includes the first year entry and graduate entry route).

Some universities limit the number of times you can apply for medicine, therefore UMAT and interview preparation is essential.

Hence preparation for UMAT and interviews is *essential* to ensure you are successful in entering your chosen course on your first attempt.

Alternatively, you can consider applying for undergraduate or graduate medicine in Australia. Keep in mind that some Australian universities will not accept you as an undergraduate if you have started a university degree.

Remember that all routes will require you to succeed in UMAT – it is crucial to being able to study medicine in NZ and undergraduate medicine in Australia.

More Information

For more detailed information and approximate GPA and UMAT scores required for each university, MedEntry students should refer to the University Admissions guide on the LMS.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Students in Year 12 or below

Your research on different university requirements should begin now! Note down the universities at which you would like to study medicine and their respective selection criteria. Ensure you are aware of the prerequisite subjects required to study at your chosen university.

Begin looking for work experience and volunteer work in the medical field. This may include work at your local aged care facility, hospital, medical centre or other volunteer organisation. It is important that you begin this early, as you will be busy in the coming years. Having done quality work experience or volunteer work and being able to talk about it in your medical interviews will set you apart from other medical school aspirants. Most universities will expect that prospective candidates will have done some work experience so they understand the role of a health professional. Volunteer work demonstrates to the university that you truly are a well-rounded individual who cares for the community and are pursuing a career in medicine or health science for the right reasons. Importantly, participating in this kind of work will give you a real taste of what is required to succeed and excel in the medical field but also whether or not this type of work is right for you.

Some students start preparing for UMAT before their final years of schooling, and if you are motivated, go for it! The earlier you start preparing for a generic skills test such as UMAT, the better. Most of the skills needed to succeed in the UMAT exam need to be developed over a period of time, and MedEntry recommends preparation for UMAT at least a year before sitting it. Note that you will not be able to actually sit the UMAT exam until your final year of schooling (year 13).

Make a shortlist of universities at which you would like to study medicine. Note down their respective selection criteria.

Volunteer and work experience will set you apart from other medical school candidates

Year 13 Students

MedEntry recommends that *year 13 students who are interested in pursuing medicine should sit the UMAT in year 13* (and then again in the first year of their university degree), for a number of reasons.

Firstly, sitting UMAT in year 13 provides excellent practice. When you sit UMAT again in the first year of your university degree, you will already be familiar with the process and experience of sitting UMAT. This will greatly reduce your stress levels and increase your performance (scores tend to improve on second sittings). You will already be ahead of others.

Secondly, UMAT tests skills that need to be developed over a period of time. Because the UMAT is a skills based exam, you cannot ‘cram’ for it. You need to learn, practice and master the skills required to succeed, and students who start earlier with their preparation do better. Furthermore, the sooner you begin your UMAT preparation, the less stress you will be under next year, when you will be busy with your university exams. UMAT preparation will also boost your year 13 performance by enhancing your thinking skills.

Thirdly, if you do well when you sit UMAT in year 13, you can apply for an undergraduate medical degree in Australia. There are many benefits to studying medicine as an undergraduate (see above for more details).

Note that UMAT scores are valid for only one year (i.e. the score that will count for entry into the NZ universities will be the score you receive on sitting UMAT in the first year of your university degree).

You should also ensure sure you are studying the required prerequisite subjects needed by your preferred university course. Ideally, you should also do some work experience and/or volunteer work in the medical field (see information in section above).

Year 13 students who are interested in pursuing medicine should sit the UMAT in year 13.

Because the UMAT is a skill-based exam, you cannot ‘cram’ for it over a short period of time.

First Year University Students

If you haven't already done so, your UMAT preparation needs to begin now!

Unlike school and university subjects, the UMAT is not a content-based exam. The UMAT aims to measure a student's aptitude and suitability for studying a medicine or health science course, and therefore is a unique exam. Success in the UMAT exam will depend on your skills in answering specific UMAT style questions, rather than knowledge-based questions.

UMAT preparation should be treated like an extra university subject and you should allocate your time accordingly. UMAT is in July so you will need to dedicate significant amounts of time in the early months of the year to prepare.

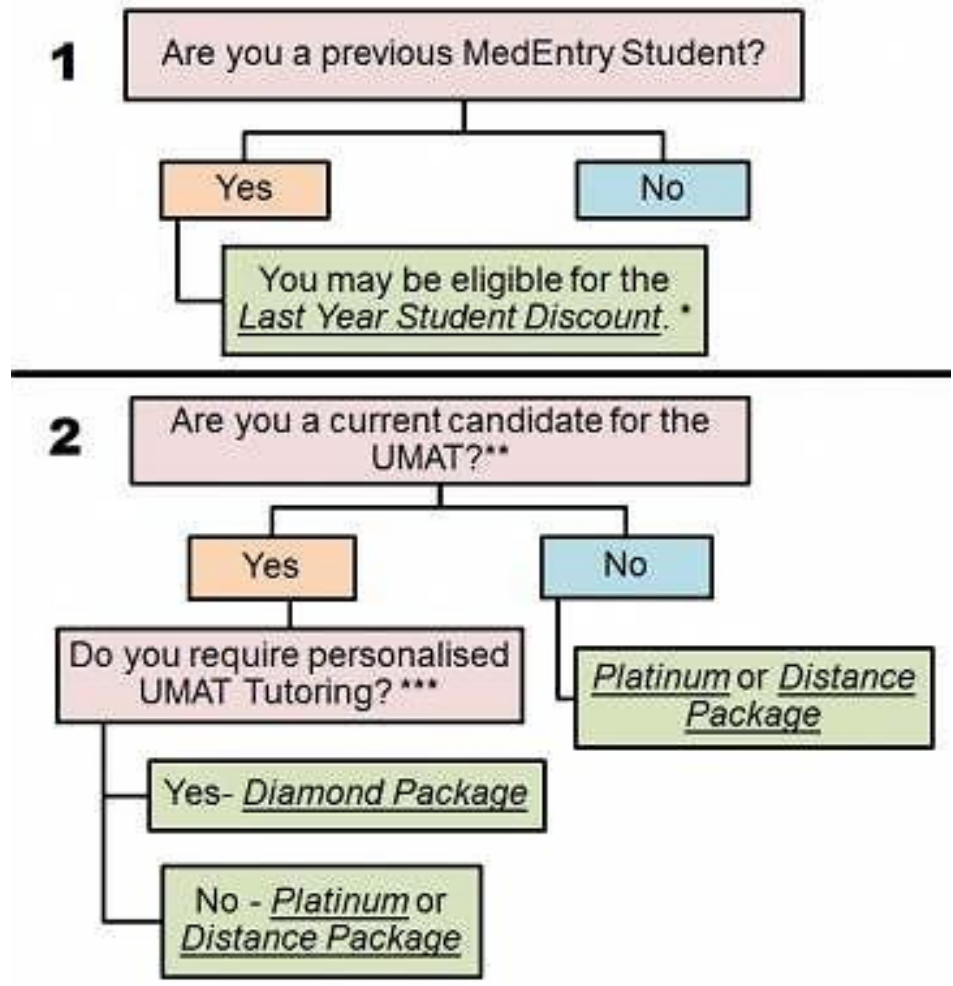
You should also consider researching scholarships offered by universities. Rural and Maori students should check their additional eligibility through universities' special access schemes as there will often be slightly lower GPA and UMAT requirements.

Once you have sat the UMAT, you may need to start preparing for an interview.

UMAT preparation should be treated like an extra subject and you should allocate your time accordingly.

WHICH MEDENTRY PACKAGE SHOULD I CHOOSE?

MedEntry has packages to suit all your UMAT needs. The Platinum Package is by far the most popular package and is the package recommended by MedEntry. Simply follow the flowchart to see which package will suit you best for the UMAT.



Footnotes from flowchart:

* Previous Student: A student who has enrolled in a MedEntry package in the previous year. The discount will be applied when you checkout.

** Current Candidate: students in the first year of their university degree, year 13, latter half of year 12, or those who are applying for the graduate entry route.

***Students will be tutored by one of MedEntry's tutors – all of whom have performed outstandingly in the UMAT (and usually GPA) themselves.

Students living in rural or remote areas or overseas can enrol in the Distance package. However, a Platinum Package is highly recommended as there may be information provided in the two day UMAT course that is not available elsewhere. Many students from overseas (e.g. South Africa, Singapore) fly in just to attend the MedEntry UMAT course because it is so valuable.

Description of Packages

All packages include access to the LMS (Learning Management System) – an online, interactive system that provides immediate feedback. The LMS contains a wealth of information and resources, including 10 full-length practice exams (with an option to add an extra 5 exams), drills, guides, forums, an unlimited question trainer and more. All of our resources are regularly updated to reflect changes in the UMAT from year to year.

The Platinum and Diamond packages also include a two day UMAT course, which is run by experts in the field. The UMAT Courses provide a comprehensive approach to all three types of question in UMAT, as well as covering interview technique (if relevant). The courses are engaging, interactive and enjoyable for students. Feedback from past students consistently state that the courses are useful not only for UMAT, but for high school/university study and life in general. An important part of the course is the opportunity to sit a simulated exam under timed conditions, and receive feedback on your performance, including your predicted UMAT score. This is helpful for planning your preparation in the lead up to the UMAT exam.

Distance package:

- Suitable if
 - You have previously attended a workshop and require continuous skill development online
 - You are unable to travel to a two day course (for example, rural and overseas students)
- In this package, you will receive online LMS access

***Choose from the
Distance Package,
Platinum Package, or
Diamond Package.***

Platinum package:

- Suitable for most students, and also if
 - You have not attended a MedEntry two day UMAT Course before
 - You would like to attend a two day Course again or sit another practice exam, as new information is often highlighted in our Courses.
- In this package, you will receive the following (please see above for details of inclusions):
 - Online LMS access
 - 2 day UMAT workshop

Diamond package:

- Suitable if you require comprehensive UMAT preparation
- In this package, you will receive:
 - Online LMS access
 - 2 day UMAT workshop
 - Personalised UMAT tutoring sessions
 - Medical Interview Training session (to be used after the UMAT results are released)
 - University Application Form Review Service

The information above is intended to be a recommendation. You may find that another MedEntry package suits you better. Students are able to upgrade their packages at any time.

UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AND PRESTIGE: HOW MUCH DO THEY REALLY MATTER FOR STUDYING MEDICINE?

Is studying medicine at the University of Auckland more prestigious than studying at the University of Otago?

Prestige, prestige, prestige. It's a word often heard echoing from the halls of the oldest universities and perpetuated by certain people who may state: 'my son will only obtain his the degree from The University of...'

When selecting your preferred university for medicine, we would suggest that there are factors to consider other than university rank and prestige. Unlike other professional practice areas such as law, the number of medical graduates is controlled by the government. Thus a career in medicine offers a safe and guaranteed job because the need and demand for medical professionals is always there. This is reflected in the success of medical graduates finding jobs after completing university. Once you graduate, you will obtain a licence to practice medicine irrespective of which university you graduate from.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that while a university as a whole may hold certain prestige, medical courses differ in how they are viewed. A university that overall may not have the 'best' reputation may have a medical course that is considered outstanding.

What are university rankings based on, anyway?

The vast majority of university rankings are based on the research output of the university. This involves: the number of PhDs obtained by academics at that university, the journals in which those academic papers are published, and the number of times such papers are cited by other academics and journals. University rankings do not tell you which universities produce graduates who have the greatest success in the medical field or who specialise in those more prestigious areas of medicine (such as Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Surgery and specialist Physician training).

When selecting the university with the right medicine course for you, we would suggest that there are other factors to consider that are more important than university rank and prestige.

The vast majority of university rankings are based on the research output of the university. They do not tell you which universities produce graduates with the greatest success in the medical field.

Older universities tend to maintain their higher rankings despite a steady decrease in their entrance scores or changes to the structure of the medicine courses offered. Most university rankings also do not take into account to a great extent other factors such as student life on campus.

So what is the best way to rank medicine courses offered by different universities?

It is almost impossible to come up with a sound ranking system for universities because the notion of what is the ‘best’ university is highly subjective. Perhaps the most effective way to judge a university is by its popularity which can be determined by several factors:

- *Is the required entrance score or other entry requirements consistently increasing?*
 - If the answer is yes, then it’s fair to say that the university’s popularity is also steadily increasing.
 - If the answer is no, then ask yourself why: it may be because the university has increased the number of medical places available and thus ‘diluted’ the entry requirements, or more likely, the popularity of that university’s medical course and medical pathway is in decline.
- *What is the retention rate?* Good universities should not have an attrition rate of more than 10%.
- *How many students from that course go on to practice medicine in highly sought after specialties?* University websites and some other independent websites will provide such statistics.

Is location important?

In an ideal world, we would all be able to walk to university or work in less than five minutes. The reality of the situation is that in some instances you may have to travel some distance to your desired university.

Keep in mind that unlike other degrees, in medicine you will usually only be on campus for the first couple of years. Subsequent years will be in hospital placements which can be situated anywhere in the country. You

will usually be able to put in your preferences for where your placement will be, and you can choose one which is closer to home.

Further things to consider

Simply attending a so-called prestigious university will not guarantee a top-tier job in your desired field of medicine. When looking at applicants, assessors will consider a number of factors – references, resume, previous work experience, performance in an interview and grades received at university. The actual medical school you attended is less important (and usually not even part of the selection criteria).

Which is the ‘better’ course?

A broken arm is a broken arm no matter which area of NZ you live in or which university you attend. Being qualified to practice medicine means you can practice throughout NZ. Furthermore, the study of medicine focuses on the application of proven, objective medical knowledge to a patient problem. All doctors throughout NZ are required to follow the same set of standards and guidelines. Therefore, the content of medical courses between universities will not differ greatly, although the style of teaching may.

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Factors to consider other than a university’s rank

We suggest you consider factors other than university rank and prestige when deciding which medicine course is best for you.

For example, consider the following:

- Which university is situated closer to where you reside?
- Student wellbeing and welfare
- Student success post-university
- Student opportunities within your course (eg. overseas placements) and extra-curricular activities
- Quality of teaching staff
- Style of teaching
- Social opportunities (eg. clubs)

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Following is a suggested timeline for students in the first year of their university degree.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Task</i>
As soon as possible	Research university entry requirements and deadlines Consider enrolling in a MedEntry UMAT preparation course
December to June	Register for UMAT
Start of June	Deadline to register for UMAT
End of July	Sit UMAT
September	UMAT results released
September-October	Deadline for applying to universities
November	Consider enrolling in a MedEntry Medical Interview Training Session If you have not already done so, ensure you obtain work experience or volunteer work in a health related field
November-December	Interviews conducted at Auckland University (Otago University interviews take place in September or November)
December-January	University offers released

DISCLAIMER

Disclaimer

The purpose of this guide is to outline some important issues to consider when pursuing a medical degree. Recommendations are based on experience and aim to assist students and parents in their decision making. All students and parents are strongly encouraged to thoroughly research all aspects of admission themselves in order to make a fully informed decision. All information contained in this guide is accurate at the time of writing.

Additional questions?

If you have any additional questions regarding any matter relating to UMAT, interviews or university admissions, please get in touch with the MedEntry UMAT preparation team.